

Biographical sketch of Beaumont W. B. Dixie, b. 1819, d. 1898

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Beaumont Wilson Bowen Dixie, doctor; b. 1819, Wales, son of Captain Richard Thomas Dixie and Harriet Wilson; m. Anna Skyner, 1841, and Elizabeth Blakely, 1868; d. 1898, Erindale, Toronto Township, Peel County, Ontario. He assumed a prominent position in the community, leading to a hamlet naming themselves after him. Subsequently, the name is reflected in a road, a mall, a public school, and other prominent assets.

Beaumont Dixie was a descendant of the Dixie Baronetcy, created in 1660, at the beginning of King Charles II's reign.¹ Its first recipient was Sir Wolstan Dixie (b. 1602, d. 1682), Beaumont's fourth great-grandfather.² The original Baronet's grandsons was Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Wolstan Dixie of Bosworth (b. 1657, d. 1713), the 3th Baronet. The 3rd Baronet had three sons and eight daughters, the youngest among them being Reverend Beaumont Dixie (b. 1729, d. 1740), the Rector of Bosworth. Reverend Beaumont Dixie's children included Reverend Beaumont Joseph Dixie (b. 1737, d. 1786), the Vicar of St. Peter's Church, Derby.

Reverend Beaumont Joseph Dixie had four sons and five daughters. Three of the sons received the hereditary title, making them the 6th, 7th, and 9th Baronets.³ The only son not to have the title was Richard Thomas Dixie (b. 1782, d. 1834), the youngest son. He would become a Captain in the Corp of Royal Marines, one of the arms of the Royal Navy. (The Museum collection includes Captain Dixie's epaulets, identified as being from when Beaumont's father served as a Lieutenant.)⁴ The Captain may have dabbled in "several funds, vulgarly called the stocks."⁵

In 1809, Captain Richard married Harriet Wilson, also of Carmarthenshire, Wales.⁶

¹ The First English Civil War (1642-1646) and Second English Civil War (1648-1651) were conflicts between Parliamentarians and Royalists over the format of the nation's governance. When a captive Charles I refused to grant a constitutional monarchy to the English and Scottish parliaments in 1649, he was executed. Baronetcys were created in 1660, when Charles II returned to England as King, beginning the Restoration Period.

Sir Wolstan Dixie (1602-1682) supported the Royalists, and was rewarded with the creation of a hereditary Baronetcy.

The last Dixie Baronet was Sir Wolstan Dixie (b. 1910, d. 1975), the 13th Baronet. His eldest daughter Eleanor was unable to receive the title, despite the then-new Sex Discrimination Act.

² Sir Wolstan Dixie's own father, Sir Wolstan Dixie (b. 1576, d. 1650) was also knighted, in 1576. Their ancestry has been traced back to Dr. Beaumont's Dixie's twelfth great-grandfather, Wolstan Dixie of Catworth (b. 14th century, d. 14th century)

³ The 5th Baronet, who died in a mental asylum, and only had daughters. As such, the Baronetcy moved to the Reverend's children.

⁴ 1989.062.009a-b

⁵ Museum collection, 1989.062.023: "Every man his own broker: or, a guide to exchange-alley. In which the nature of the several funds, vulgarly called the stocks, is clearly explained. And the mystery and iniquity of stock-jobbing laid before the public in a new and impartial light."

⁶ According to a family tree in the Forrester family fonds, Harriet Wilson's father was Thomas H. Wilson, R.N. As there were no registered nurses until the 20th century, it's posited that Thomas was in the Royal Navy. The Dixie

Harriet Dixie was born to Captain Richard and Harriet on August 3, 1810.

Eleanor Francis Dixie was born to Captain Richard and Harriet on September 9, 1816.

Wolstan Alexander Dixie was born to Captain Richard and Harriet in 1817.

Anna Skynner, who would later become Beaumont Dixie's wife, was born in 1818.

Beaumont Wilson Bowen Dixie was born to Captain Richard and Harriet in 1819.

Richard Thomas Dixie was born to Captain Richard and Captain Harriet in 1821.

Dr. Joseph Adamson, Peel's first formally-trained doctor, arrived in the Clarkson area in 1822. At least once a month, Adamson would service the Credit Indian Reserve, as required by the government.⁷ (It's unknown at present if Dixie had the same requirement. He did buy items from an Alexander Thorburn, of Indian Village, in 1862.)⁸

Henry George Pochin Dixie was born to Captain Richard and Harriet on September 15, 1827.

Dr. William Blakely emigrated from Scotland to Canada in 1831, setting up a practice in Cooksville.⁹

Richard, Harriet, Beaumont, and Wolstan emigrated from Carnarvonshire, Wales to Stamford, Upper Canada in 1831.¹⁰ (Later press reports claimed that Richard or Harriet's parents also made the trip, but this is unsubstantiated.)¹¹ The move was prompted by his retirement from the Navy.¹²

The family settled in Stamford Township, County of Lincoln.¹³ In modern times, their property is within the boundaries of the City of Niagara Falls. At one point, the family lived in the former residence of Sir Peregrine Maitland, who served as the Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada from 1818 to 1828.¹⁴

Upper Canada College opened in 1829. According to Bull, Dixie and his brother were "among the first pupils";¹⁵ The Globe has claimed that they were enrolled in the fourth year of the institution.¹⁶

file at Mississauga Library System's Canadiana Room supports this, as they have a copy of Thomas Henry Wilson, Stamford's will.

⁷ Adamson, Jane, *Erindale: the crook of the Credit*, 1978 edition.

⁸ Beaumont Dixie fonds (1989.129), series 3, file 1, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁹ "Doctor's surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale", *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

¹⁰ Bull, "Honest men and quacks." In *From medicine man to medical man*, 105.

¹¹ "Doctor's surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale", *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

¹² "Doctor's surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale", *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

¹³ Bull, "Honest men and quacks." In *From medicine man to medical man*, 105.

¹⁴ Bull, "Honest men and quacks." In *From medicine man to medical man*, 105.

¹⁵ Bull, "Honest men and quacks." In *From medicine man to medical man*, 105.

¹⁶ Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. "Historians rue loss of the Demeter home." *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7.

Beaumont Dixie as a doctor, early years, 1834 to 1843

From 1832 to 1837, English-born doctor John Rolph ran a medical school in York. Dixie is believed to have attended this facility.¹⁷ Beaumont Dixie received a license to practice “Physic, Surgery and Midwifery” in 1834.^{18 19}

Elizabeth “Bessie” Blakely, later Beaumont Dixie’s wife, was born January 27, 1834.²⁰

The Dixie family was well-entrenched in local life by the 1830s. Mother Harriet seems to have known Robert and Augusta Baldwin, despite them never being Stamford or Niagara residents.

In one January 1836 letter, Beaumont notes to his mother that “Mrs. Robert Baldwin died on Monday morning of water on the Brain, so I have heard.”²¹ (Eliza Baldwin’s birth of Robert Baldwin Jr in 1834 required surgery, and from which she never fully recovered.)²² In February 1836, Beaumont’s brother Wolstan told his mother that a friend “presented your compliments to Mr Baldwin.”^{23 24} This is a reference to Lieutenant-Governor Sir Francis Bond Head appointing Robert Baldwin and five others to the Executive Council of Upper Canada as an attempt to appease the growing reform movement. When Bond Head refused to follow-up on his promise of responsible government, Baldwin and others would resign, less than a month later.²⁵

Dr. William Pool Crewe established himself in Cooksville, Toronto Township, around 1837.

¹⁷ According to Canadian Encyclopedia, Rolph was a secret supporter of William Lyon Mackenzie, which led to him fleeing in 1837. The school was relaunched at Toronto in 1843. This is contrary to the account of Dixie’s life in some accounts, that suggest Rolph founded the school in 1837, that the school had transitioned to the Medical Department of King’s College by the time Dixie had enrolled, and that Dixie graduated in 1843. The article also claims that the Upper Canada Medical Board was established in 1838, when The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario lists the Medical Board of Upper Canada’s establishment as 1818. “Medicine for heroes: a neglected part of childhood life”, *The Mississauga South Historical Society*, 1981.

¹⁸ Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. “Historians rue loss of the Demeter home.” *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7.

¹⁹ Dixie’s medical license was part of the 2019 Forrester donation.

²⁰ 1871 Canadian census

²¹ Correspondence from Beaumont Dixie to Harriet Dixie, January 13, 1836, Forrester family fonds, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

²² Michael S. Cross and Robert Lochiel Fraser, “BALDWIN, ROBERT,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed August 21, 2019, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/baldwin_robert_8E.html.

²³ Correspondence from Wolstan Dixie to Harriet Dixie, February 20, 1836, Forrester family fonds, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

²⁴ There is no evidence about how the Dixie family and Robert Baldwin were acquainted. It’s likely that Robert Baldwin would visit the Niagara area on occasion, where Beaumont lived, and Wolstan lived in Toronto. Baldwin was educated as a child by John Strachan, who was good friends with Sir Peregrine Maitland, the previous owner of the Dixie house, but such a connection is largely tenuous.

²⁵ Correspondence from Wolstan Dixie to Beaumont Dixie, February 20, 1836, Forrester family fonds, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

Also in 1837, the Anglican, Methodist, and Presbyterian residents of southern Toronto Township built a Union Chapel at the crossroads of Sydenham. It was known on occasion as Stone Chapel.²⁶

Beaumont Dixie married Anna Skyner in 1841.

Beaumont Dixie received his medical license in 1842²⁷ or 1843.^{28 29}

Around 1843, Dixie set up a practice in Oakville, Halton County, Ontario.

Around 1844, Dixie moved his practice to Grahamsville,³⁰ a community on the border between Chinguacousy Township, Toronto Township, and Toronto Gore Township. In the present-day City of Brampton, the community would have been located at Airport Road and Steeles Avenue.

Beaumont Dixie as a doctor, based in Erindale, 1843 to 1898

Around 1843, Beaumont Dixie moved to Springfield, Toronto Township, a hamlet at the intersection of the Credit River and Dundas Street. (The first colonial-era settlers arrived at Springfield in 1808, establishing a post office in 1831. Previous names included Credit,³¹ Credit Mills, and Toronto Mission, the latter being a reference to St. Peter's Anglican Church. Since 1900, it has been known as Erindale.)³² On March 1, 1843, he purchased 50 acres of land, "bargain and sale", from William Thompson.³³

Beaumont Dixie would generally travel to patients, as "a horse-and-buggy doctor". More than one source claims that he maintained offices in Grahamsville and Port Credit.^{34 35 36}

Peel's townships were given self-governance in 1851,³⁷ creating a large sense of self-identity.

²⁶ Alan L. Brown, "Dixie Union Chapel", Ontario's Historical Plaques.

http://ontarioplaques.com/Plaques/Plaque_Peel09.html

²⁷ Bull, "Honest men and quacks." In *From medicine man to medical man*, 105.

²⁸ Bull, "Honest men and quacks." In *From medicine man to medical man*, 399.

²⁹ Dixie's bookshelf included various titles that were old in his era, including a four-volume set called "A System of Chemistry", ca. 1804 (Museum collection, 1989.062.024-027), "Engravings of the Skeleton of the Human Body", ca. 1818 (Museum collection, 1989.062.028), along with more modern options "The Illustrated Stock Doctor", ca. 1881 (Museum collection, 1989.062.032).

³⁰ Bull, "Honest men and quacks." In *From medicine man to medical man*, 399.

³¹ Dixie's woven canvas bag reads "Dr. Dixie, Credit". This is possibly the **only contemporaneous reference to this name** to survive. (Museum collection, 1995.003.005)

³² **Place Names of Peel**

³³ Abstract index to deeds, Toronto Township. The transaction was recorded by the Land Registry Office on May 5, 1843.

³⁴ "Medicine for heroes: a neglected part of childhood life", *The Mississauga South Historical Society*, 1981.

³⁵ Janet L. Morton, "Dixie: the rich rural roots of a bleak urban landscape", n.d. is an article from an unknown newspaper found at the Canadiana Room of the Mississauga Library System, in the "Dixie" vertical file. It claims that his practice extended "from Toronto to Georgetown." The validity of this claim is unknown.

³⁶ "Dr. Dixie's House, Erindale", Mississauga Library System.

http://www.mississauga.ca/portal/residents/erindalegallery;jsessionid=A447583D17EFF2D4C1BB4419AC8FC017.node2-2?paf_gear_id=13200032&imageId=6500007n&index=91&returnUrl=%2Fportal%2Fresidents%2Ferindalegallery%3Bjsessionid%3DA447583D17EFF2D4C1BB4419AC8FC017.node2-2%3Fstart%3D81

At some point after Captain Dixie's death, Beaumont's mother Harriet came to live at Trawsmaur, W. R. Davies' residence in Wales. She died at Cape Trafalgar in the Andalusia region of Spain, on February 5, 1848.³⁸ Harriet was said to "not make up mind to part from your sister Mrs. Deverell";³⁹ Beaumont is only known to have one sister, Harriet Wilson (b. 1811, d. 1881), who became Harriet Waters.⁴⁰ Davies notes that he was acting to "sell out the funds, to remit to you," with regards to his parent's estate.⁴¹

In 1852,⁴² Dr. James A. McKay set up in Castlemore, Toronto Gore Township. Perkins Bull considered McKay and Crewe to be the only contemporaries of Dr. Dixie.⁴³

Beaumont and Anna had four children, early in their life, including:

- Willoughby B. Dixie,⁴⁴ listed in many records (b. 1849 or 1850, d. August 13, 1854, aged five years),
- Wolston Alexander Dixie (d. August 9, 1854, aged eight months),
- Anna Frances Dixie (d. January 20, 1853, aged five months),
- and Ellenor Dixie (d. July 15, 1854, age unknown).

All of them died during the 1853-1854 diphtheria outbreak.⁴⁵

After the deaths, Beaumont and Anna purchased a house on Dundas Street,⁴⁶ made of pink ballast-brick from England.⁴⁷ The house was valued at \$1200, as of 1866.⁴⁸ Architecture details suggest that

³⁷ Neill, Kyle. "About Peel." Archives @ PAMA. August 16, 2019. Accessed August 16, 2019. <https://peelarchivesblog.com/about-peel/>. "Canada West dissolved its Districts in 1850, into smaller Counties. Locally, the Home District Council became the United Counties of York, Peel, and Ontario. The latter county left the union in 1854, and Peel separated from York in 1867."

³⁸ Correspondence from W. R. Davies to Beaumont Dixie, April 6, 1848, Forrester family fonds, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

³⁹ Correspondence from W. R. Davies to Beaumont Dixie, April 6, 1848, Forrester family fonds, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁴⁰ MYMF-VP3

⁴¹ Correspondence from W. R. Davies to Beaumont Dixie, April 6, 1848, Forrester family fonds, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁴² Wm. Perkins Bull, *From medicine man to medical man: a record of a century and a half of progress in health and sanitation as exemplified by developments in Peel*, 405. Toronto: Wm. Perkins Bull Foundation, 1934.

⁴³ Bull, "Honest men and quacks." In *From medicine man to medical man*, 105.

⁴⁴ "Toronto Mission burial registry", accessed at the St. Peter's Anglican Erindale in 2019. Willoughby is often referred to as "Richard Beaumont Willoughby Dixie", however this name is unsupported by period records. Similarly, this document uses the burial registry's spelling of "Ellenor", usually standardized as Eleanor.

⁴⁵ One source implies that the children died in 1854 (Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. "Historians rue loss of the Demeter home." *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7.), while another source states that they died in 1853. ("Medicine for heroes: a neglected part of childhood life", *The Mississauga South Historical Society*, 1981.) Neither actually provides a source for their claim, and there are no primary sources available on the standard websites, nor are there tombstones for the children.

⁴⁶ Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. "Historians rue loss of the Demeter home." *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7.

⁴⁷ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁴⁸ Township of Toronto tax assessment, October 18, 1866, 1991.067, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

it predates the couple, and would have been built no later than 1830.⁴⁹ A dispensary was added in an expansion, after some years.⁵⁰ There is record of the family having at least one staff member.⁵¹

Despite their tragic loss, Beaumont and Anna restarted their family, giving birth to Mary Amelia Dixie (b. 1857, d. December 7, 1941, m. James H. Sprowl, one daughter, two sons) and Christianna W. Dixie (b. 1860, d. 1943, Streetsville, m. Henry Noble, around 1897, two sons).

Beaumont is said to have been quite fond of the Erindale area. Bertha Dixie commented in 1938 that he “always said after a trip to the city, he was glad to come back home.”⁵²

Dixie received a cow from James B. Harris, the owner of Benares, in August 1857, and agreed to pay him x \$35 for it on New Year’s Day January 1858. By 1860, Dixie had not paid by March 1860.⁵³

Beaumont attended Nancy Harley, and by May 1863, Charles Woodland of Toronto Woolen Mills wrote to say he thought it was “near time to see that you are Paid for your trouble. I think I need scarce say he as reasonable as your [unreadable] as the poor girl has no means of her own and there is no likelihood of her being able to work in the factory.” Woodland suggested he might take up a collection “among the factory hands” to pay the remainder of her bill.⁵⁴ Harley is believed to have been born around 1828, making her 35 at the time of the letter.

By 1865, the unincorporated hamlet of Sydenham had become known as Fountain Hill.⁵⁵ The community received a post office in 1865. As every post office needed a unique name for delivery purposes, residents chose “Dixie” for the well-liked local doctor.⁵⁶ Dixie had donated money to the Union Chapel that year, helping his favour with locals.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. “Historians rue loss of the Demeter home.” *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7. The Mississauga Public Library is more conservative, dating it merely to “before 1854.”

⁵⁰ Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. “Historians rue loss of the Demeter home.” *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7.

⁵¹ “...when your servant-man arrived with those delicious apples.” Correspondence from [Mossie Wood] to Bertha Dixie, January 29, 1897, 1989.129, series 2, file 3, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

Series 3, file 1 of the same accession includes a wedding invitation from Mr. and Mrs. R. A. Wood, 38 Isabella St, Toronto, to the wedding of Amy Louise Wood to William Ayres Addams, June 22, 1898. This information may be of help confirming Mossie’s identification.

⁵² “Doctor’s surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale”, *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

⁵³ Correspondence from James B. Harris to Beaumont Dixie, March 10, 1860, 1991.067, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁵⁴ Correspondence from Charles Woodland to Beaumont Dixie, May 18, 1863, 1989.129 series 2, file 1, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁵⁵ East of Cooksville, the community was also known as “Irish Town” at times, based on its demographics. As such, it’s odd that it was named for a Welsh-Canadian.

⁵⁶ [Place Names of Peel](#)

⁵⁷ This is often misdescribed online as Dr. Dixie paying “for the establishment of the Union Chapel,” largely on real estate agent websites.

An undated letter to Dr. Dixie referenced him advising “friends and patients against going to Lorne Park this season, on account of the prevalence of typhoid fever there.”⁵⁸

Beaumont’s wife, Anna Dixie, died May 15, 1867 in Erindale.

A year after Anna’s death, 1868, Beaumont Dixie remarried, choosing Elizabeth “Bessie” Blakely (b. 1834, d. 1923).

Sarah Bertha Harriet Dixie⁵⁹ was born to Beaumont and Bessie Dixie on October 19, 1869. She would be known as Bertha Dixie.^{60 61} A press clipping from 1938 described the 69-year-old as a “tall, handsome woman.”⁶² In her early years, Bertha studied piano music at Loretto Abbey, St. George Street, Toronto, becoming a “gold medallist” in the practice.⁶³ (The Museum collection includes at least seven books or booklets of sheet music, largely for the piano forte, between ca. 1824 and ca. 1867. One of these items is directly credited to “Bessie Blakely,” her mother.)⁶⁴ Bertha’s interest in the arts extended to visual arts.⁶⁵

Beaumont may have served as a coroner’s constable, someone who “selects the jury and helps maintain order during an inquest,”⁶⁶ as he kept a fee notice from 1872.⁶⁷

Beaumont Dixie’s practice occasionally ventured into mental health. A lawyer wrote to Dixie about Mrs. Waterhouse and “her two daughters”, who had fled to Toronto in 1886, on the belief that “she thinks her husband is insane.”⁶⁸

Bessie was grantee of 59.5 acres from the Crown in 1887.⁶⁹

Dixie family, 1898 to 1913

Beaumont Dixie had an ailment as of 1897.⁷⁰

⁵⁸ Correspondence from Helen E. McMaster to Beaumont Dixie, June 26, unknown year, 1991.067, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁵⁹ Various records claim that Bertha’s name was “Sarah Harriet Bertha Dixie,” however her 1917 taxes and at least one item of correspondence lists her as S. B. H. Dixie.

“Township of Toronto, 1917” (tax form), 1989.129 series 3, file 1, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁶⁰ “Doctor’s surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale”, *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

⁶¹ The Museum collection includes a pair of children’s leather boots, attributed to Bertha. 1995.003.129a-b

⁶² “Doctor’s surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale”, *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

⁶³ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁶⁴ These items are 1989.062.001 to 1989.062.007.

⁶⁵ Artists’ box, 1995.003.126.

⁶⁶ <https://www.mcscs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/DeathInvestigations/Inquests/AidToInquests.html>

⁶⁷ “Fees to coroners’ constables”, December 12, 1872, 1886, 1989.129, series 7, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁶⁸ Correspondence from A. MacNabb to Beaumont Dixie, December 14, 1886, 1989.129, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁶⁹ January 20, 1887, Elizabeth Blakeley, grantee of mortgage from Crown, NE part, 59.5 acres.

June 4, 1887, Elizabeth Dixie et al, grantor of mortgage to Jonadab D. Hardy, NE part.

Beaumont Dixie died of a stroke on his birthday, in 1898, age 79.⁷¹ Around the time of his death, Dixie was one of roughly 30 doctors in Peel, serving a population of 30,000.⁷²

When Beaumont Dixie died, Bessie Dixie ordered that the surgery-dispensary room remain intact. The only exception was his bookshelf, of which many books went to two of Beaumont's friends.⁷³ (Bessie also made a clipping of her hair.)⁷⁴

Dixie's practice may have been sold in 1900. Someone signing Wan. J. Wesley wrote to the Dixies from Mount Albert, "seeing your advertisement in yesterday's Mail & Empire, "Doctor Wanted" I would like to know the particulars. Size of place, opposition, and extent of practice. Please send word at once."⁷⁵ The family looked at selling a portion of their land in 1904, receiving legal advice on such a sale.⁷⁶

Bessie Dixie had unspecified medical issues in 1910. One of Bertha's friends, who lived in Parkdale, wrote that she "was so glad to hear, yesterday, that your mother was, at least, not any worse, and I do hope we will get some good news of her to-day. It is a most trying time for you, especially as she has so many complications, any one of which are serious enough."⁷⁷

The letter writer's mother-in-law seems to have been convalescing at the Dixie house in 1910.⁷⁸ "Mother Cotton" is likely related to Robert Cotton, who served as the Reeve of Toronto Township in the

⁷⁰ "We are so glad to hear Dr. Dixie is improving, it is wonderful, he must have had a very strong constitution." Correspondence from [Mossie Wood] to Bertha Dixie, January 29, 1897, 1989.129, series 2, file 3, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁷¹ Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

⁷² Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

⁷³ "Doctor's surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale", *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

⁷⁴ 1989.129, series 2, file 5, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁷⁵ Correspondence from Wan. J. Wesley to "Sir" [possibly Bessie Dixie], May 9, 1900, 1989.129, series 2, file 5, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁷⁶ Correspondence from [unreadable] Mercer to Bertha Dixie, October 19, 1904, 1989.129, series 3, file 1, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

Bessie Dixie's state as of this time was unknown, as Bertha Dixie was dealing with the real estate question. The firm was Mercer & Bradford, Barristers, Solicitors, Notaries, &c. of Toronto.

⁷⁷ Correspondence from [Eva Cotton] to Bertha Dixie.

⁷⁸ The letter (1991.067) was sent by "Eva," at 122 Galley Avenue, Parkdale. According to the *Might's* directory for 1910, the address was "headed" by Robert Cotton. The letter asks "How is Mother Cotton? Give her my love and tell her to take good care of herself", suggesting that this woman was not directly the mother of the letter-writer. As various methods of searching Robert Cotton have found little on him, it's likely that he wasn't "society", but that Eva also trained at Loretto Abbey.

"*Might's* Greater Toronto city directory, 1910", *Might Directories Ltd.*, 1910.

Cotton was mentioned in at least one letter, Correspondence from Lizzie Martin to Bertha Dixie, April 12, [1903 or 1908], 1989.129, series 2, file 3, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

1860s. Reeve Cotton was married to Sarah Hunter Blakely. Bessie Dixie was born Bessie Blakely; Bessie and Sarah's relationship is unknown.⁷⁹

Bertha Dixie, 1913 to 1952

Bessie Dixie died on 23 April 1913, at age 79, and was interred on 24 April 1913. According to *The Streetsville Review and Port Credit Herald*, she "was one of Erindale's oldest inhabitants," and "had a nasty fall, and it is thought that the injury she sustained by it was the means of hastening her death."⁸⁰ From that point on, daughter Bertha Dixie lived alone in the family house,⁸¹ with relatives and friends in the area.⁸²

Third Concession East, Toronto Township, the road that led to the community of Dixie, gradually took on a local name of "the Dixie road". This title was used by the media by at least 1917, if not earlier, when *The Globe* referred to Toronto-Hamilton Highway road conditions at "the Dixie road."⁸³

By 1938, Beaumont's surgery-dispensary room remained intact, but was being used for storage. She had considered de-assembling the room, but worried about accidentally poisoning herself.⁸⁴ When asked by *The Globe and Mail* if she used any of the medicine in the room, she "laughed merrily" that she used the local drug store.⁸⁵ Part of the home would be closed off each winter, in this era.⁸⁶

There was some sort of sudden snap with Bertha, between 1938 and the 1940s. One letter written after her death recalls "I was told that Bertha lived in complete seclusion allowing no visitors but the O'Briens, and kind neighbors passed meals to her through the shutters."⁸⁷

Around 1945, Bertha visited the nearby Rylance family, hatchet in hand. She asked "if they would help to light the stove, as 'mother has gone down to O'Brien's store to get the mail.'" Concerned for her, they arranged for her to move to a "rest home", possibly in Cooksville.⁸⁸ The house was soon damaged by "school boys", who shredded Bessie Dixie's wedding dress and left it in a ditch. "Distant cousins" removed sterling silver pieces "forsafe keeping" (sic).⁸⁹

⁷⁹ According to one letter – [unreadable] to [Bertha Dixie], January 10, 1895, 1989.129, series 2, file 4, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada – the family was living at Lambton Mills as of 1895.

⁸⁰ *The Streetsville Review and Port Credit Herald*, 1 May 1913, pg 1.

⁸¹ Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

⁸² "Doctor's surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale", *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

⁸³ "Toronto-Hamilton Route", *The Globe*, March 28, 1917, pg 8.

⁸⁴ "Doctor's surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale", *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

⁸⁵ "Doctor's surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale", *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

⁸⁶ "Doctor's surgery left untouched forty years in old house at Erindale", *The Globe and Mail*, March 5, 1938, pg 5.

⁸⁷ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁸⁸ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁸⁹ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

Shortly after Bertha left the Dixie house, artist George Daly moved into a nearby property named “The Cottage”.⁹⁰ (There is minimal surviving information on this artist. Daly was previously from the Spadina riding of Toronto,⁹¹ moving to Erindale by at least 1949.⁹² He remained active as an artist in Ontario until at least 1975.⁹³ Daly specialized in drawing, graphic design, mural painting, and watercolour.⁹⁴)

Sarah Harriet Bertha Dixie died on March 22, 1951, at Islington. (It’s believed that she was moved to a senior’s facility in that community.) She was buried at St. Peter’s Anglican Church Cemetery, in Erindale.⁹⁵

Fate of Dixie house and belongings, 1952 to 2019

In 1952, the Rylance family asked Daly to bid for the Dixie house, and purchase some antiques.⁹⁶

“Bertha had lived in one small room and the shed and hallways were piled to the ceiling with papers and small tree branches, kindling. Mail on the hall table dated 1920. There was a priceless English spinet in the parlour where moss and cobwebs hung from the ceiling. The doctor’s carriages and sleighs were well-sheltered in the stable along with many handmade implements and tools, garden rakes, etc. Beaumont’s office behind the kitchen was in perfect condition, the shelves lined with apothecary jars and a small walnut cabinet for poisons and drugs was under lock and key... It is unfortunate that trunks and boxes filled with priceless history were discarded ‘to tidy up the house.’ The book, mail and records filled an upstairs bedroom.”⁹⁷

The Rylance family asked Daly to pay \$5000 for the house. They claimed to receive a second bid for the same amount, but were willing to secure it for Daly for \$5,500. Faced with extensive annual travel plans and the cost of restoration, Daly declined.⁹⁸ The building was sold to Stuart Vaisey, a salesman, and wife Adele,⁹⁹ who claim to have “paid much less.” They stayed for only two years, given Adele Vaisey’s allergy to the rabbit fur in the partitions and flooring.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁰ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁹¹ Carroll, W. T. (revising officer), “Electoral district of Spadina, City of Toronto, urban polling division No. 68”, In *The Dominion Elections Act finally revised urban alphabetical list of electors*, Government of Canada, 1940, pg 1.

⁹² Clement, Marie (revising officer), “Electoral district of Peel, Erindale North, urban polling division No. 12”, In *The Dominion Elections Act finally revised urban alphabetical list of electors*, Government of Canada, 1949, pg 2.

⁹³ https://app.pch.gc.ca/application/aac-aic/artiste_detailer_bas-artist_detail_bas.app?rID=3922&fID=2&lang=en&qlang=en&pID=1&an=daly+george&ps=50&sort=AM_ASC

⁹⁴ https://app.pch.gc.ca/application/aac-aic/artiste_detailer_bas-artist_detail_bas.app?rID=3922&fID=2&lang=en&qlang=en&pID=1&an=daly+george&ps=50&sort=AM_ASC

⁹⁵ “Deaths”, *The Globe and Mail*, *The Globe and Mail*, March 26, 1951, pg 28.

⁹⁶ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁹⁷ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁹⁸ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

⁹⁹ “Electoral district of Peel, Erindale North, urban polling division No. 12”, In *The Canada Elections Act urban revised alphabetical list of electors*, Government of Canada, 1953, pg 3.

¹⁰⁰ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

At some point after the death of Bertha Dixie, someone involved in the estate buried a variety of Dixie family papers in the orchard, on the Dixie property. A selection of the papers blew into Daly's yard, alerting him to the decision. Under the cover of nightfall, excavated the items.¹⁰¹

The Vaisey family sold the house to the Fosters.¹⁰² They "over-spent" on renovation, and moved out.¹⁰³ Daly had moved to Toronto by that point, and was unsure who owned the house between them and the Demeters.¹⁰⁴

The mix of historic architecture and modern features, like a pool, attracted model Christine Demeter to the Beaumont Dixie House, now numbered as 1437 Dundas Crescent. It was purchased by developer¹⁰⁵ Peter Demeter, her husband. According to Daly, the architectural changes made to the building were unfortunate.¹⁰⁶

The Dixie family ownership and subsequent renovations were both quickly overshadowed. In 1973, Demeter bludgeoned Christine to death in the garage.¹⁰⁷ In summer 1983, the house was gutted by three separate fires over a 12-week period.¹⁰⁸ Peter Demeter was charged with three counts of arson for the actions;¹⁰⁹ those charges were stayed in 1986.¹¹⁰ As of 1984, efforts to have the house designated under the Ontario Heritage Act were unsuccessful.¹¹¹

In the late 1980s, Beaumont Dixie's medical instruments were purchased by Black Creek Pioneer Village.¹¹²

A donation of Dixie's records were given in 1989 to the Region of Peel Archives.¹¹³ George Daley gave his find to Tommy Adamson in 1990, who he considered to be "the recognized authority and historian of

¹⁰¹ Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

¹⁰² The Fosters do not seem to appear on the Voters' list in the 1950s. I have not done formal land research into the house's ownership, to confirm spelling. Daly had initially listed them as "The Russells."

¹⁰³ Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

¹⁰⁴ Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

¹⁰⁵ Demeter owned Eden Gardens Custom Builders, Toronto. "Clubbed to death: Police see no motive in slaying of woman", *The Globe and Mail*, July 20, 1973, pg 1.

¹⁰⁶ Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

¹⁰⁷ Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. "Historians rue loss of the Demeter home." *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7.

¹⁰⁸ Sakamoto, John, "Demeter won't face trial in abduction, arson cases", *The Toronto Star*, December 23, 1986, pg A2.

¹⁰⁹ Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. "Historians rue loss of the Demeter home." *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7.

¹¹⁰ Sakamoto, John, "Demeter won't face trial in abduction, arson cases", *The Toronto Star*, December 23, 1986, pg A2.

¹¹¹ Byers, Mary and McBurney, Margaret. "Historians rue loss of the Demeter home." *The Globe and Mail*, February 9, 1984, pg L7.

¹¹² Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

¹¹³ Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.

Springfield-on-the-Credit.¹¹⁴ Adamson passed the records along to the Region of Peel Archives almost immediately, in 1991.¹¹⁵

In 1995, the museum received 144 artifacts at once, credited to Russ Cooper, but likely a transfer from Black Creek Pioneer Village. This accession includes items owned by Dr. Dixie, such as three amputation saws (1995.003.006, 1995.003.007, 1995.003.125), two eyeglasses (1995.003.016a-b, 1995.003.022), dental forceps (1995.003.039), rib shears (1995.003.044), and a tooth key (1995.003.047).

The accession also includes items owned by Caledon village veterinarian Dr. Rutledge Stubbs. Some items in this accession have unclear provenance, particularly the instrument case (1995.003.130), breast pump (1995.003.132), or bleeding cup (1995.003.131) in the collection was owned by Dixie and Stubbs.

At some point, Beaumont and Anna's daughter Mary Amelia Dixie (b. 1857, d. 1941) married James H. Sprowl (b. 1850, d. 1905). Their three children included Harry Alexander Sprowl (b. 1891, d. 1974), whose two children included Lillian Irene Sprowl (b. 1920). A selection of records related to Harriet Dixie and Dr. Beaumont Dixie ended up in the possession of Lillian and her husband Anson C. Forrster (b. 1905, d. 1974). They were donated to the Region of Peel Archives in 2019, by son of two sons, Richard "Rick" Forrster.

Options for further research

There are documents of potential interest at the Canadian Room, Mississauga Library System, that were not consulted by the previous researcher.

A calendar in the Museum collection is from Western Assurance (1989.062.008), now a division of RSA. Some Ontario insurance companies do maintain corporate archives and make older policies available. There may be health information in their files, about the various family members.

None of the records reviewed identify who in the family was fond of woodworking, and thus can be given the attribution for Dr. Dixie's log dog, awl, chisel, leather punch, etc.

There is conflict about whether Dixie purchased or inherited the land on which his Dundas Street house was located, and whether the house in which he lived had already been built. Land records would clarify this issue, although the matter is of course a technicality.

¹¹⁴ Correspondence from George Daley to Tommy Adamson, March 12, 1990, 1991 accession case file, Region of Peel Archives, Peel Art Gallery, Museum and Archives, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.

¹¹⁵ Byrne, Caroline, "Turn-of-the-century medical records reveal absorbing picture of the past", *The Toronto Star*, February 8, 1990, pg. W14.